



## PROJECT OVERVIEW

### **I-66 Planning Study Purpose, Issues, Schedule, and Project Goals I-66 from the Natcher Parkway to the Nunn (Cumberland) Parkway**



### **Study Purpose**

The purpose of this Planning Study is to identify and evaluate alternate interstate route corridors, including the “no-build” alternate, for I-66 between the Natcher Parkway and the Nunn (Cumberland) Parkway. The study may determine one or more corridors to be further examined in preliminary engineering and environmental studies.

The I-66 Corridor was originally defined in the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) as a “high priority corridor,” and the Kentucky Corridor was designated in the 1995 National Highway System (NHS) Designation Act as centered on the cities of Pikeville, Jenkins, Hazard, London, Somerset, Columbia, Bowling Green, Hopkinsville, Benton and Paducah. I-66 was found to be economically justified and financially feasible in the 1997 Southern Kentucky Corridor (I-66) Study, and was included in the *Statewide Transportation Plan* (FY 1999-2018). Segments of I-66 across Kentucky are in various stages of project development ranging from corridor studies to final design.

The objectives of this study for I-66 in the Bowling Green area are:

- To identify and evaluate potential corridors;
- To determine if these corridors are technically feasible;
- To identify the social and environmental impacts of the corridors; and
- To determine if any corridor can be supported by the public.

### **Issues**

While I-65 provides a freeway connection between the western terminus of the Nunn (Cumberland) Parkway and the eastern terminus of the Natcher Parkway, continuity of the I-66 route is of concern through the Bowling Green area where I-66 uses the existing parkway system east and west of Bowling Green. Although I-65 through Warren and Edmonson Counties is presently being reconstructed or programmed for reconstruction as a six-lane facility (with an adequate median width to accommodate an eight-lane facility in the future), I-65 may not be able to accommodate future traffic volumes in the year 2025 at a desirable level-of-service even with eight lanes due to additional east-west traffic resulting from the completion of I-66 as a continuous route through southern Kentucky. There are presently several segments of the State highway network in Warren County where the accident rates per vehicle-mile of travel exceed that of similar facilities statewide. While the State has programmed major improvements for many of these facilities, there are still some facilities for which improvements are not presently programmed. Further, with over 100 accidents per year along I-65 between major interchanges and several accidents leading to the temporary closure of I-65, the diversion of interstate traffic through small towns as an emergency detour is of concern. With the prohibition of truck traffic through Mammoth Cave National Park and otherwise inadequate facilities from Edmonson County to the interstate system, truck access from Edmonson County to the interstate system for the movement of freight is a problem. Since 1972, the Bowling Green Transportation Plan has proposed an outer beltway from I-65 at the Natcher Parkway around the east and north side of Bowling Green to the Natcher Parkway near Hadley. Thus, the extent to which an I-66 corridor may help achieve the Bowling Green Outer Beltway is also a consideration.

Finally, for any new freeway corridor through the study area, there are many concerns about potential impacts to the human and natural environments. The concerns associated with the human environment include potential impacts to the numerous historic structures, cemeteries, parks, and public buildings in the study area, as well as possible impacts on the rural character of small communities such as Smiths Grove and Oakland. Concerns associated with the natural environment include sinkholes, caves, springs, wetlands, rivers and streams, threatened and endangered species, and park lands.

## **Project Schedule**

I-66 in Warren and Edmonson Counties is identified in the Long-Range Element of the KYTC 1999 *Statewide Transportation Plan* (FY 1999-2018) as an “illustrative highway project” (i.e., source of funding unknown). In the *KYTC 2000 Six Year Highway Plan* (titled the *Approved 2000-2002 Biennial Highway Construction Program and Identified Preconstruction Program Plan for FY 2003 through FY 2006*), I-66 in the Bowling Green area is scheduled only for a planning study. State Highway Funds have been appropriated for this study. No subsequent phases are programmed at this time.

## **Draft Statement of Project Goals**

The project goals for the segment of I-66 between the William H. Natcher Parkway and Louie B. Nunn (Cumberland) Parkway are as follows:

1. Support the completion of I-66 across southern KY to carry out the legislative intent of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), the 1995 National Highway System (NHS) Act, and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21).
2. Provide an improved, efficient interstate access from the Natcher Parkway to the Nunn Parkway for systems continuity of I-66 from the West Virginia State line to Missouri.
3. To improve accessibility throughout Southern Kentucky to jobs, industry, urban centers, educational institutions, tourism, and recreational facilities.

To the maximum extent possible, there are other local and regional objectives that will be considered. Some of these local and regional objectives include:

- Potentially using this roadway as a portion of an Outer Loop of Bowling Green.
- Accommodating increasing traffic and truck volumes on major arterial roadways in Warren County by diverting traffic to an interstate facility.
- Improving travel safety.
- Reducing travel time and user costs.
- Providing improved access to Brownsville and Edmonson County to discourage commercial vehicles from traveling through Mammoth Cave National Park.
- Providing alternate entrance routes for Mammoth Cave National Park.

These project goals will be used in the performance evaluation of alternate corridors for I-66 from the Natcher Parkway to the Nunn (Cumberland) Parkway. In addition to these project goals, possible environmental and community impacts, transportation agency project costs, local and regional transportation needs, and public input will be considerations in determining a course of action.

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## **Information:**

Website at <http://www.kttc.state.ky.us/planning/I-66/I-66.htm>